

# **ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION POLICY FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY AND TESTING IN ALABAMA**

Alabama Historical Commission  
Alabama State Historic Preservation Office (ALSHPO)  
Adopted May 13, 1996  
Revised October 1, 2002

## **Introduction**

This policy has been developed to aide archaeologists conducting archeological intensive survey (Phase I) or testing (Phase II) projects that are required as elements of cultural resource assessments for compliance with federal laws and regulations, including the National Historic Preservation Act (as amended); Executive order 11593; the National Environmental Policy Act of 1966; Department of the Interior regulations 36 CFR 60, 36 CFR 63, 36 CFR 66 and 36 CFR 79; and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation regulations 36 CFR 800. We also request that this Policy be followed by federal agency archaeologists who are exempted from this by federal regulations. Phase II investigations shall not be initiated without consultation with the Alabama State Historic Preservation Office (ALSHPO) and the approval of a testing program.

The purposes of these standards are to specify clearly and unequivocally the minimum requirements necessary to complete an archaeological survey and to provide standardized criteria by which the State Historic Preservation Office will evaluate the archaeological segments of cultural resource assessments. These standards are designed for application to normal field situations likely to be encountered during intensive survey and testing projects; deviation from these standards is acceptable when dictated by circumstances, and requires only that the report contain justification of the procedures employed in that instance. Four aspects of archaeological survey standards are addressed in this document; (1) professional qualifications, (2) field work, (3) laboratory analysis and curation, and (4) reports:

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## **Professional Qualification Guidelines**

It is suggested that applicants involved in the Section 106 process hire a principal investigator who meets the minimal professional qualifications in archaeology as set forth in "Archaeology and Historic Preservation: Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines" (Federal Register Vol. 48, No. 190, September 29, 1983, Part IV, page 44739). Cultural resource review history has demonstrated that surveys done by archaeologists who meet the Federal Standards have a greater success rate than other surveys. The Standards and Guidelines determined by the National Park Service for archaeologists are as follows:

"The minimal professional qualifications in archaeology are a graduate degree in archaeology, anthropology or closely related field, plus:

1. At least one year of full-time professional experience or equivalent specialized training in archaeological research, administration, or management.
2. At least four months of supervised field and analytic experience in general North American archeology; and
3. Demonstrated ability to carry research to completion."

In addition to these minimum qualifications, professional archaeologists should have at least one year of full-time professional experience at a supervisory level in the study of prehistoric and/or historic archaeological resources. Documentation (in the form of official graduate transcripts and curriculum vitae) should be submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office prior to the commencement of fieldwork or should accompany the survey report.

All reports submitted to the Alabama State Historical Preservation Office (ALSHPO) are subject to peer review. All reports prepared by investigators who do not meet the standards **will** be circulated for peer review. In addition, every tenth report received by the Alabama Historical Commission will be sent out for peer review regardless of whether the investigator meets standards or not.

## **Standards for Field Work**

A project's Principal Investigator assumes full responsibility for adherence to these standards for intensive survey and testing, for the accuracy of the report, and for the appropriateness of the recommendations regarding National Register eligibility.

Direct field supervision by a professionally qualified archaeologist is recommended for Phase I projects. Phase II & Phase III investigations require supervision by a professional archaeologist who meets the qualifications outlined in 36 CFR 61. Mitigation investigations may not proceed without consultation with the ALSHPO and the development of the appropriate written agreement.

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Every effective archaeological survey will require field methods that appropriately address the needs of the client, the nature of the landscape, the types of sites likely to be encountered, and the overall research goals of the project director. Consequently, all projects must begin with a written

"Statement of Purpose" or "Scope of Work" or "Research Design". For a previously un-surveyed tract, such a statement might simply indicate a systematic procedure of site discovery. Projects involving test excavation would normally require methods designed specifically to determine site eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places, based on the research significance of the site. Since it is impossible to anticipate every field situation, these standards should be understood to apply to normal circumstances. When field conditions require some deviation from standard procedures, then any departure from these guidelines must be described and justified in terms of the statement of purpose or research design.

Every archaeological survey must include a systematic pedestrian walk-over, a visual inspection of the survey tract, and the systematic collection of significant artifacts from the ground surface. If some portion of a tract's original land surface has been completely destroyed by modern activities (such as by strip mining or quarrying), then no further survey procedures are required in that area beyond producing written and photographic documentation of the destruction and a map indicating the location and extent of the destroyed area.

In most circumstances, additional survey methods will be necessary. Under normal field conditions, systematic subsurface testing (involving either shovel tests or auger tests of consistent width or diameter) should be conducted to the depth of the subsoil, with tests that measure no less than 30 centimeters in diameter and that are placed at intervals no greater than 30 meters (or no fewer than 9 tests per hectare). At least one shovel test should be conducted within the boundaries of each archaeological site that you intend to declare ineligible. All soil from shovel tests should be screened through mesh no larger than 1/4 inch.

Survey intensity, however, may vary depending on ground cover, soil type, the probability of buried sites, predictive models regarding the likelihood of sites occurring on different land forms, and the needs of the client. In locations where previous surveys have demonstrated a low probability of site discovery, the test interval can be extended up to, but no greater than, 60 meters. Close interval testing (5 to 10 meters) is recommended for establishing site boundaries. Remote sensing survey methods (such as metal detecting and ground penetrating radar) may also be useful for particular types of surveys. Screening may not always be feasible when testing areas with very heavy clay soils but please explain this in the text of the report.

In many areas of the state, subsoil lays within 30 to 50 centimeters of the ground surface. But in some locations (such as flood plains and coastal zones) archaeological sites can be found at much greater depths. When appropriate, this possibility must be addressed, either by deep testing or by restricting impact to the depth limits of archaeological testing.

For areas of standing water (such as swamps and marshes) or where the top of the water table lays near the ground surface, usual methods may not be feasible. If those areas will be affected by proposed impact, they should not remain unexplored. If the principal investigator's knowledge of local

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geomorphology and past settlement patterns suggests that sites might exist in inundated locations, then some method or archaeological survey should be applied, such as the use of geological sediment coring equipment.

As a general rule, test to subsoil at 30 meter intervals and screen the soil with 1/4 inch mesh, unless field conditions dictate some variance from this standard. In any case, the project report must contain a description of all survey methods employed and a justification for using less rigorous methods.

Test-excavation units for Phase II projects need to meet higher standards. These units must be excavated by natural strata, if identifiable (as determined by prior shovel testing or auguring); features must be excavated separately; and all soil must be screened through 1/4 inch or smaller mesh. Other techniques commonly used by professional archaeologists may be proposed but variance will require concurrence from the ALSHPO. Since the research significance of a site is evaluated during Phase II survey, soil/flotation samples must be taken from features and/or undisturbed strata. The contents (botanical, faunal, etc.) of these soil/flotation samples must be adequately categorized to inform the determination of site significance and National Register eligibility. In Phase II investigations of prehistoric sites, <sup>14</sup>C assays must be done when appropriate samples are present within reliable context. Any planned deviations from suggested methods may be justified in the research proposal.

During surveys and testing projects, artifacts should be collected according to a defined sampling strategy. For instance, if modern artifacts (less than 50 years old) are not collected, the strategy needs to be explained and applied consistently. Even so, the presence of modern artifacts should be recorded in field records. Certain kinds of sites (such as shell midden and lithic quarries) can yield massive quantities of similar artifacts that are best dealt with by sampling, rather than by total recovery. In those cases, the samples should be representative of the assemblage from which they are drawn, and the samples should be selected from meaningful stratigraphic units. Systematic surface collection of surface artifacts is not recommended, since this could preclude future relocation of the site. All artifacts must be bagged and labeled by separate provenance.

Survey recording also needs to meet minimum professional standards. Each testing team must keep daily field notes, and they need to record all survey activities and observations. Each subsurface test must be designated with a distinguishing field number and its location accurately plotted on a large scale map or aerial photograph of the survey tract. The use of Global Positioning System (GPS) for this purpose may prove increasingly useful for providing more precise location coordinates. Each soil type encountered during a survey should be described by soil texture and color (preferably by reference to "sand grain" sizing gauges and Munsell color designation). The soil horizons found in each test then ought to be described in the field notes in terms of horizon thickness, depth from the surface, and soil type, along with descriptions of the kinds of quantities of artifacts found.

Standing structures need to be placed in an archaeological context by means of the same subsurface survey and testing methods applied to other cultural features noted on the ground surface. Structures found associated with subsurface archaeological deposits should be assigned a state site

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number, and that number should be referenced in the corresponding cultural resources survey of standing structures conducted by an architectural historian.

If human skeletal remains are discovered in the course of fieldwork, appropriate federal and state legal requirements must be addressed. Copies of the regulations dealing with the treatment of human remains may be obtained from the ALSHPO.

Required field photographs include: representative views of different types of terrain and ground cover located in the survey tract; at least one photograph of every significant site feature and standing structure; and a photograph of each Phase II and Phase III excavation unit showing site strata.

Every shovel test, auger test, and test excavation unit must be refilled upon completion of the survey project unless consultation with the ALSHPO has produced an agreement to forego filling.

## **Standards for Laboratory Analysis and Curation**

Every artifact must be cleaned, labeled with permanent provenance designation (either by writing directly on the artifact or by placing artifacts in appropriate labeled containers), and listed in an inventory organized by provenance. Type identifications should correspond to local and regional descriptive and classificatory systems, unless a rationale for new types is in the project report.

Artifacts requiring stabilization by a professional conservator should receive prompt treatment.

All survey collections (including artifacts, field records, laboratory records, and a copy of the final report) must be placed in an archaeological repository for permanent curation approved by the Alabama Historical Commission. Such repositories must meet Department of the Interior 36 CFR 79 (see additional materials at the end of this document) guidelines for "professional, systematic, and accountable curatorial services on a long-term basis". These services include storing and maintaining collections in clean, physically secure conditions with appropriate environmental controls, and providing access and facilities for study of the collections.

Institutions and organizations in the state that already comply with federal guidelines, or which submit a plan and timetable to the Alabama Historical Commission for upgrading their archaeological curation facilities and demonstrate progress in meeting federal guidelines, will be permitted to retain their own newly-acquired survey collections. Other institutions, organizations, and private consultants (including university personnel acting as private consultants) must either include a curation agreement in the project report (indicating where collections will be curated and when they will arrive at that repository) or reference a curation agreement filed with the Alabama Historical Commission. These curation agreements must comprehensively address the requirements outlined in 36 CFR 79.

## **Standards for Reports**

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The report of an archaeological survey should be, above all, a clear and concise presentation of project purposes, methods, results, and recommendations. Do not include "boiler-plate" descriptions of the environment, prehistoric cultural sequence, or historical chronology if these do not directly contribute to an interpretation of the research design or the survey results. However, each report should contain the following sections.

**I. The Title Page** needs to include the following:

- a.) A report title (including the project name and location-- city and/or county);
- b.) The client's name and address
- c.) The report author's names(s) organizations, and address
- d.) The name of the lead state or federal agency and the contract or permittee if applicable.
- e.) The previous Alabama Historical Commission Tracking (AHC) number if the project is a result of a request for survey by the AHC. Also include the federal agency's tracking number if applicable.
- f.) The date of report submission.

**II. The Introduction** must include the following:

- a.) The project's statement of purpose including the proposed action/project (if not possible, explain that the client declined to provide that information.)
- b.) The federal agency involved (if not possible, please explain why.)
- c.) Scope of work, or research design
- d.) A description of the survey tract by Township, Range, and Section designations, along with its location plotted on copies of the relevant portions of USGS maps with the project area clearly defined. If a copy of only a section of the quadrangle map is used, please include the name of the quadrangle in the report.
- e.) The size of the area of potential effect (APE) in acres. When multiple APEs are involved, please provide a total acreage.
- f.) The likely effect of an undertaking on the APE, including the view shed when vertical elements such as cell towers, water towers and smokestacks are proposed.
- g.) The principal investigator for the survey. This individual must have presented documentation to the State Historic Preservation Office of his or her qualifications as a professional archaeologist prior to commencement of fieldwork.
- h.) The number of people on the field crew and the number of days spent in the field.

**III. The Literature and Document Search** section includes results of searches of the National Register of Historic Places, the Alabama State Site Survey File for cultural resources on or near the survey tract and the National Archaeological Database for studies conducted in the area. The report should include references to published archaeological papers or reports concerning the general or specific survey area; reference to the Alabama Register, county histories, or any other pertinent

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documentation; and a discussion of the relevance of this background research to the survey. It may also be helpful to consult the Department of Transportation's *Historic Bridge Inventory*, the *Directory of Underground Coal Mines in Alabama*, *The Historic Atlas of Alabama*, knowledgeable informants from the community, etc. when applicable.

**IV.** In a **Field Methods** section, specify the personnel who conducted the field work and identify the field director; describe the physical condition of the survey tract, such as ground cover and terrain; include a description of the area surveyed; describe and justify the survey methods employed (including test depth and interval, excavation unit size, and screen mesh size), noting any deviation from the standards described here. If the spacing of shovel tests and/or transects exceeds 30 meters please justify.

Present scaled maps or vertical aerial photographs locating the walked transects, shovel tests, auger tests, test excavation units and other survey features in relation to one or more verifiable datum points. Map scale should be reasonable according to survey size so that shovel test may be plotted at an effective size. If visual inspection alone is employed as a primary alternate testing strategy, please include the transects walked by the survey crew on your map and differentiate them from those transects in which subsurface investigation was employed. Sketch prominent features of the landscape such as wooded areas, open areas, roads, streams, structures, push piles, fence lines, etc. Exceptions are made in projects covering large survey areas or long linear tracts in which transects are plotted with the number of shovel tests indicated in the text.

Explain the relationship between the expected direct and indirect effects of the client's proposed impact and the survey methods chosen; discuss any obstacles to your survey (e.g., standing water, soil conditions, inclement weather, etc.) When appropriate, include a map indicating disturbed areas, wet areas, areas currently under cultivation, steeply sloped areas, and any other areas in which varying test methods were employed. Include a key explaining the environmental conditions which require deviation from the methods recommended by these guidelines.

Describe soil profiles from shovel tests and excavation units based on visual observation. Soil survey references should not be used as stand-alone descriptions. Profile descriptions should include the depth, color, and texture of each stratum.

Discuss artifact sampling and collection procedures.

**V.** Under the heading, **Laboratory Methods** and **Collection Curation**, describe laboratory treatment of collections; indicate which state approved archaeological repository will curate the artifacts and field records resulting from the survey; and when the collection will arrive there. If necessary, attach a copy of a curation agreement to document the ultimate disposition of the collection.

**VII** In the **Results** portion of the report, summarize results of oral history interviews of studies of private collection; discuss all of the cultural resources revisited or discovered in the course of the survey; provide maps, profile drawings, and photographs of test excavation unit stratification and features; include artifact descriptions, photographs, line drawings, and inventories; and provide site descriptions, with permanent site numbers assigned, and captioned site photographs.

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Copies of completed **State Archaeological Site forms** will be appended for each new site located during the investigations. If the survey requires the revisiting of a previously recorded site, the investigator will prepare a statement of the conditions of the site. An amended form shall be attached if there are significant changes noted at the site or additional information is produced. Though it is not required the ALSHPO suggests that the archaeologist attempt to visit any recorded sites near a survey area and assist in the continuing assessment and protection process.

**VII.** A section on **Survey Interpretation and Evaluation** must include a summary of site interpretations; a discussion of the research significance of each site, based on site integrity and the archaeological data likely to be recovered; and evaluations of site eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places, according to criteria A, B, C, or D. This evaluation is a recommendation to the ALSHPO and does not constitute a Determination of Eligibility.

**VIII.** The final required section concerns **Recommendations**, including a discussion of known or potential impact, and specific recommendations for further archaeology. The client's development plans must be clearly summarized here to provide a context for evaluating the appropriateness of the archaeological recommendations.

If sites found during survey are determined not eligible for nomination to the National Register and the ALSHPO subsequently agrees with this determination, then no further work will be recommended. If eligibility cannot be determined from a Phase I intensive survey, then a recommendation for further work in the form of Phase II testing is appropriate. Phase II work cannot begin without the recommendations and concurrence of the ALSHPO. For sites determined eligible, recommendations can include "Avoidance", "Protection/Stabilization", or "Data Recovery" to mitigate adverse effects on the archaeological resources.

**IX.** Additional sections which should be appended to the report include items such as lists of references cited, artifact tabulations, and state site forms.

Upon acceptance of the report by the client, the client or applicant is responsible for forwarding at least two (2) copies of the report to the ALSHPO. A copy will be forwarded by the AHC to the Alabama State Site File at Moundville at monthly intervals.

All survey and testing reports are subject to external peer review during the State Historic Preservation Office's federal 106-review process. All reports submitted by individuals not meeting the criteria outlined in 36 CFR 61 will be circulated for peer review. Applicants will be informed of the receipt of reports and given a date for the completion of the peer review. Phase II, Phase III and other major Cultural Resource Assessment documents will also be considered for review.

A copy of the written peer review procedures are made available to any interested party. Any changes to these guidelines will only apply to projects initiated after the public announcement of those changes.



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Additional Materials

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
National Center for Cultural Resources National NAGPRA

## **36 CFR 79: Curation of Federally-Owned and Administered Archaeological Collections**

### **Authorities**

Antiquities Act (16 U.S.C. 431- 433), the Reservoir Salvage Act (16 U.S.C. 469-469c), section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470h-2), and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 470aa-mm).

### **What does 36 CFR 79 cover?**

- Responsibility for Federal collections;
- Procedures and guidelines to manage and preserve collections;
- Terms and conditions for Federal agencies to include in contracts, memoranda, agreements or other written instruments with repositories for curatorial services;
- Standards to determine when a repository has the capability to provide long-term curatorial services; and
- Guidelines for collections access, loan, and use.

### **What is a “collection?”**

A collection is *material remains* that are excavated or removed during a survey, excavation or other study of a prehistoric or historic resource, and associated records that are prepared or assembled in connection with the survey, excavation or other study. §79.4 provides detailed definitions of the kinds of material remains that fall under the regulation.

### **Who is responsible for ensuring that federally owned and administered collections receive proper care?**

The Federal Agency Official is responsible for ensuring proper care of federally owned and administered collections. The Federal Agency Official is “any officer, employee or agent officially representing the secretary of the department or the head of any other agency or instrumentality of the United States having primary management authority over a collection that is subject to this part.” [36 CFR 79.4 (c)]

### **What constitutes proper care of federally owned and administered collections?**

Repositories, whether they are Federal, State, local, or tribal, must be able to provide professional, systematic, and accountable curatorial services on a long-term basis. Among their responsibilities, repositories must → Provide a catalog list of the collection contents to the responsible party (i.e., Federal Agency Official, Indian landowner, or Tribal official);

- Periodically inspect the physical plant to monitor physical security and environmental conditions;
- Periodically inspect the collection and associated records to monitor their condition;
- Periodically inventory the collection and associated records;
- Provide a written report of the results of inspections and inventories to the responsible party; and
- Make the collection available for inspection by the responsible party.

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#### **Are there special requirements for archaeological collections from Indian lands?**

Yes. Because Indian tribes are sovereign nations, archaeological collections from Indian lands are treated differently under 36 CFR 79. The Indian landowner or Tribal official retains jurisdiction over the collections, including the right to determine access, use (including religious use), and disposition. Federal Agency and Repository Officials are encouraged to document their agreements with Indian landowners or Tribal official regarding the care and use of archaeological collections from Indian lands.

#### **What kinds of uses are encouraged for federally owned or administered collections?**

36 CFR 79.10 addresses the scientific, educational, and religious use of such collections. Appropriate educational and scientific uses of collections include in-house and traveling exhibits, teaching, public interpretation, scientific analysis, and scholarly research. § 79.10 also describes the requirements that must be met when loaning a collection, and provides guidance for allowing destructive analysis under certain circumstances.

#### **Are there special requirements for the use of religious remains in collections?**

Yes. Religious remains are “material remains that the Federal Agency Official has determined are of traditional religious or sacred importance to an Indian tribe or other group because of customary use in religious rituals or spiritual activities. The Federal Agency Official makes this determination in consultation with appropriate Indian tribes or other groups.” [36 CFR 79.4 (i)] Note that the definition of “religious remains” is broader than the NAGPRA definition of “sacred object.” Under § 79.10, religious remains in a collection must be made available to persons for use in religious rituals or spiritual activities. If the religious remains are from Indian lands, the Indian landowner or Tribal official must give consent prior to such use. Under § 79.11, religious leaders, Tribal officials, and official representatives of other groups for which the remains have religious or sacred importance have the right to periodically inspect the religious remains.

#### **May a repository repatriate NAGPRA items that are part of a federally owned or administered collection?**

No. The Repository Official must “redirect any request for transfer or repatriation of a federally-owned collection (or any part thereof) to the Federal Agency Official, and redirect any request for transfer or repatriation of a federally administered collection (or any part thereof) to the Federal Agency Official and the owner.” [36 CFR 79.8 (n)] Further, “the Repository Official shall not transfer, repatriate or discard a federally-owned collection (or any part thereof) without the written permission of the Federal Agency Official, and not transfer, repatriate or discard a federally administered collection (or any part thereof) without the written permission of the Federal Agency Official and the owner.” [36 CFR 79.8 (o)]

#### **Are NAGPRA cultural items excavated or removed from Federal or tribal lands after November 16, 1990 considered to be “collections” under 36 CFR 79?**

No. However, Federal agencies should adhere to the standards of 36 CFR 79 in providing care for such cultural items prior to their disposition.

#### **Where can I learn more about 36 CFR 79?**

- The complete text of the regulation is available online at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/aad/tools/36cfr79.htm>.
- Information about managing archeological collections, including the requirements of 36 CFR 79, is available online at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/aad/collections/index.htm>.